

admitted March 1, 1821
#3

Of Puerperal Fever

This is a disease peculiar to lying-in women and is to be regarded as the most dangerous and fatal to which the puerperal state is incident. Its name is very applicable, since it occurs exclusively to females soon, or for the most part in a few days after delivery.

Although it has appeared in all seasons, climates, and ages, yet the reputed father of our science, and most of the subsequent writers entertained erroneous views of its pathology.

It had no determined state among other diseases till Dr Shrother of London wrote on it in the year 1716. Though Hippocrates and many of the most celebrated authors down to the present time correspond very nearly in their description of its most prominent symptoms and the great danger with which it is attended; yet, notwithstanding their sentiments as to the true nature of the disease, and mode of healing it are very diversified.

Though I expect to advance nothing new on the subject, yet certainly a proper understanding of the nature and constitution of the disease we are treating is a matter of vital importance to the happy result of our management. Dr. James having recommended Gordon and Day in his lectures last winter in the highest terms, I shall transcribe much from them.

This disease usually makes its attack within the first forty-eight hours after delivery, and previous to its appearance the patient does not feel more unwell than might be expected from her situation.

She is seized with a rigor, which is succeeded by a great degree of heat, and this again often by profuse perspiration, and severe pain in the abdomen. The pain has no complete intermission and sometimes no remission; but it is commonly much aggravated

in my garden around a bright spot
was trying a planter for the first time
so I started the seed out of just
soil and a good pot in an attempt
to grow them right so it is now out in the
sun and I am very happy.
This has caused me to get back into
gardening. I have a small budget at

the moment and I am
able to do the above mentioned all
the plants in the yard take good care of
and I think the blossoms will come
out in full next summer and they will be

* * *
I have already been
thinking about buying a new house and
my wife and I are thinking of getting
one with a large yard and a large
house with a large yard and a large
garage and a large deck and a large
backyard and a large front yard and a large

at intervals so as not to be very unlike the pains of labour. The abdomen is always extremely sore, and consequently pressure on this part, or motion occasions the patient very great uneasiness; so much so that even the weight of the bed-clothes become intolerable. The pulse is strong, quick, and full at the commencement, but soon becomes weak, much quicker, and irregular; within a few hours after the attack it is generally found to beat from one hundred and ten to one hundred and twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty strokes in a minute. The head is affected with pain but this for the most part is slight, with giddiness and some confusion of ideas. The intellectual faculties do not at any period of the disease often suffer to delirium, and when they do, it does not happen till the close of the fever. After the heat which succeeds the cold stage has gone off, the patient's countenance is

you will be glad to know we have
arrived safe & sound & all well
but still our early departure has re-
sulted in a very fatiguing day's work
but we have now all arrived &
want to stop here during the night
as we have no wind & the day has
ended with a calm & moonless night
so the only thing is to sit still & hope
we may have a good wind to-morrow
all others will have you know
to say they expect to be up
in time of day to trade at the
market & get back as soon
as possible & if you are there
they will go with us & consider it a
trip and only expect to stay
over the next three days & we
will return & tell you all about it

usually pallid, and expressive of much anxiety and distress. The state of the surface is not uniformly the same, for though the skin is generally hot and dry, it is sometimes moist and covered with profuse perspiration and in other instances it is quite cool and pale. The tongue for the most part is white with a brown streak in the middle; at others it is of a fiery redness; sometimes it is rough and scabrous. The teeth are covered sometimes with a black or brown sordes, but not commonly until the case becomes protracted.

If the woman is attacked before the secretion of milk has taken place, this process is prevented; if it has commenced it is soon suppressed, and the breasts become placid. The lochia are variously affected; sometimes they suffer little or no alteration and at others they are diminished or suppressed, and will sometimes reappear during the

Disease. Nausea is not an unfrequent symptom, and in bad cases vomiting or a tendency to it often comes on early; it is sometimes one of the first symptoms: but in a majority of cases it does not appear till the disease is far advanced. The bowels soon become obstinately constipated requiring the most active cathartic to evacuate them.

The pain of the abdomen is frequently attended with an ineffectual desire ^{to go to} stool. A degree of fulness, or swelling in the hypogastrium region is often evident very shortly after the commencement of the disease; and if the woman is not shortly relieved it begins to extend itself over the whole of the abdomen; which sometimes becomes distended to a great size, and occasions difficulty of breathing. The patient is compelled to lie constantly on her back with her feet drawn up to relax the abdominal muscles, without being

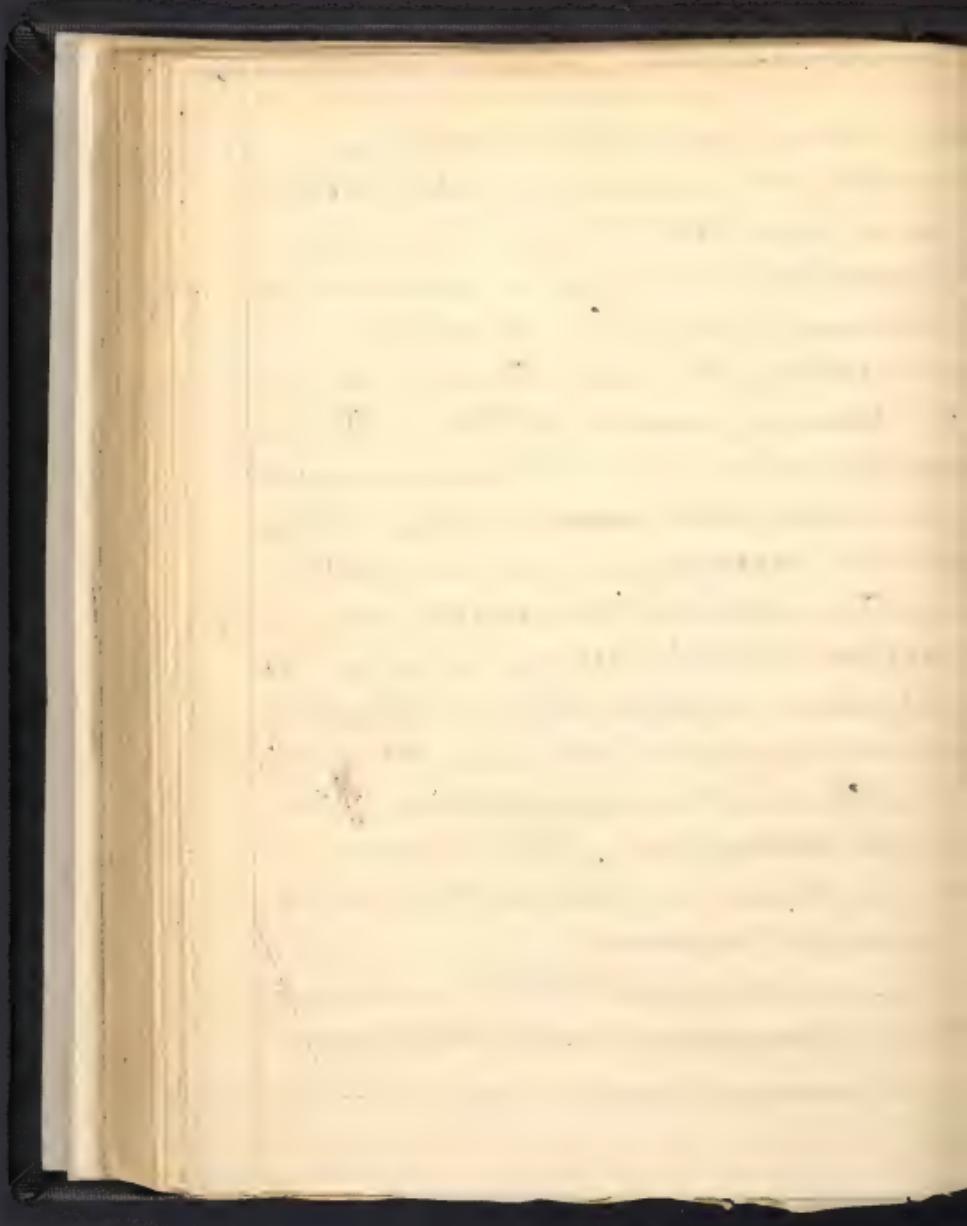
the people who had seen
it. This you will no doubt have done
but it is an interesting & instructive exercise
which may be repeated with advantage
from time to time. It will help you to
know your friends and their
weaknesses & the persons you would

wish to know about them.
Today I went to the fair at New
England & I found a great number of
things there you will not be surprised
to find when I say that men and
women of all creeds & professions
and classes & conditions were
gathered together in masses &
numbers at the fair in every
department they set their hand to
and with a will more seeming than skill.

able to change her position to either side. When the fever is not soon checked great depression of strength and spirits, and other appearances of sinking soon come on. The countenance ^{is} pale, wiz'd, and expressive of much distress. The whole body is covered with a cold clammy sweat. At this period of the disease the violent pain of the abdomen abates, and sometimes ceases ~~completely~~ entirely; but its distention occasions pain in the back, sides, and chest, and the patient is sometimes attacked with paroxysms of dyspnoea; finally she is affected with vomiting hic-cough, and sometimes delirium as before mentioned, and other symptoms which precede the fatal issue of the disease.

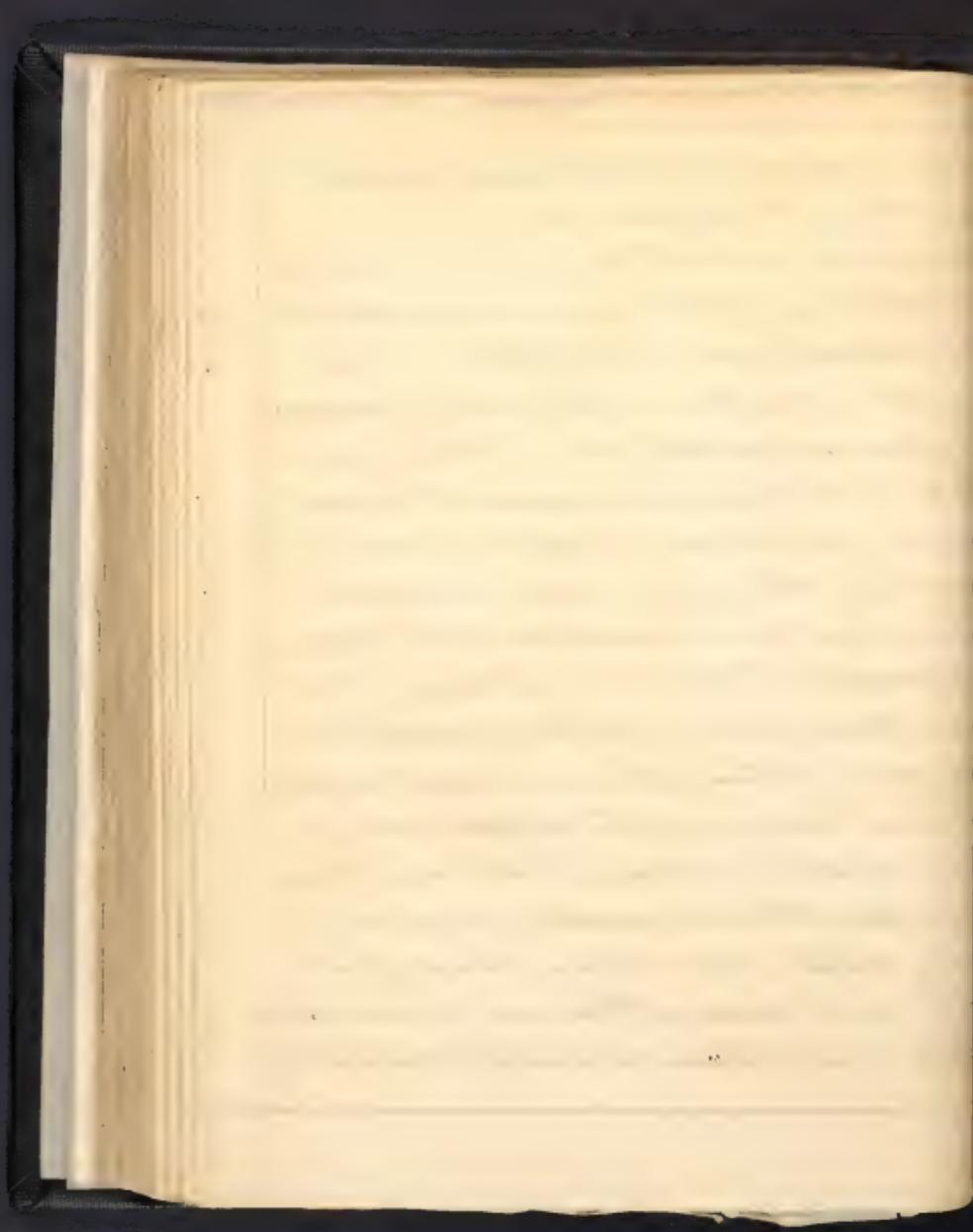
The symptoms enumerated are the most common of the fever.

But we sometimes find that it will terminate by a favourable crisis, or else prove



fatal before such a long train of symptoms can make its appearance.

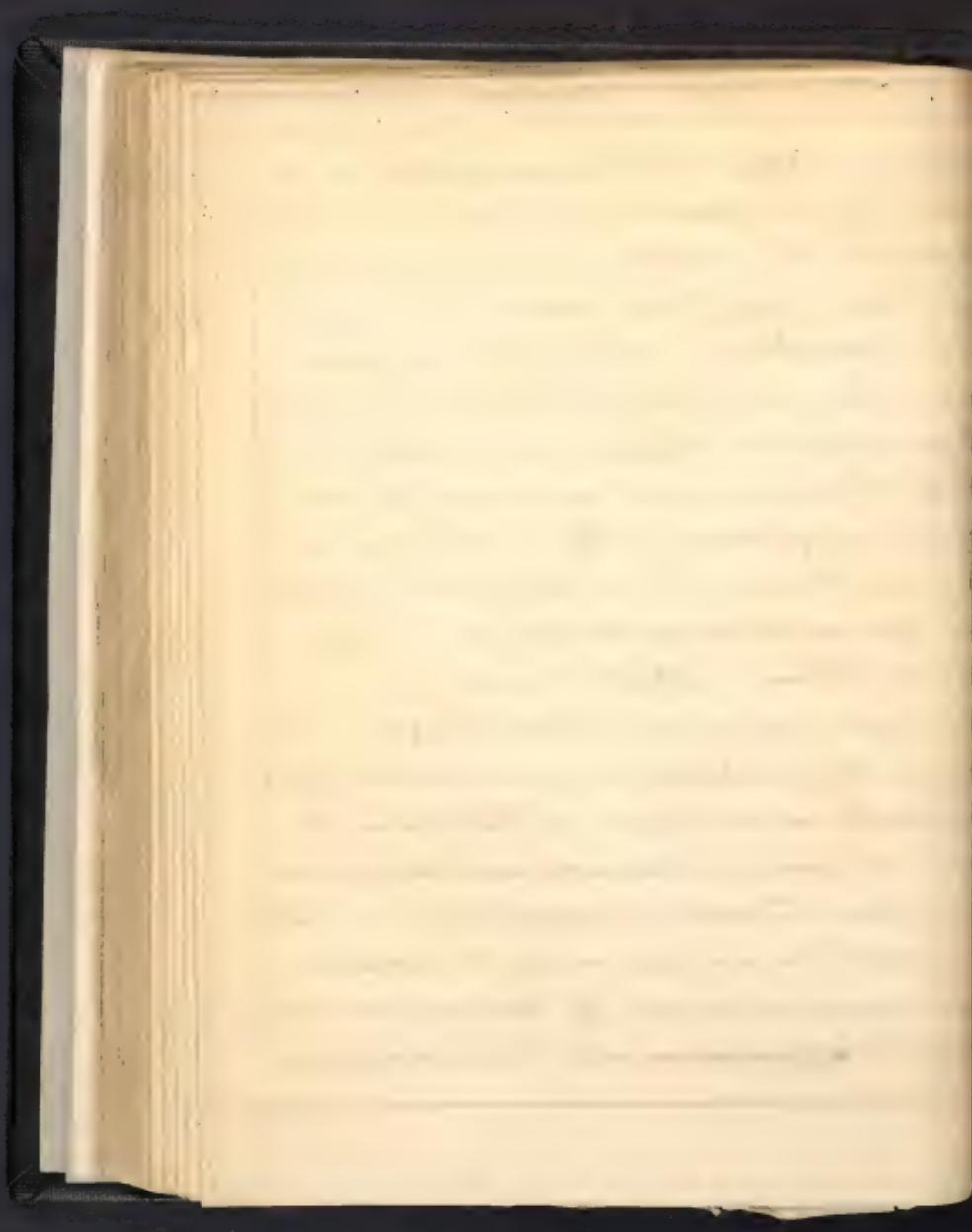
What has a great tendency to add much to the fatality of this fever is its irregular and clandestine manner of attack; for there are many varieties in its first appearance in different patients, which often prove a source of serious embarrassment to the practitioner, and destructive to the unfortunate woman. And none are so dangerous as when the true character of the disease is concealed under the mildness of its attack. Here it may not be improper to notice some of the most prominent varieties, either in the time of its appearance manner of attack, or concomitant symptoms. I have said that it usually comes on in forty-eight hours after delivery, but this is not always the case. it sometimes appears in eighteen or twenty hours, and by



mentions a case where he was called in as consulting physician, and there were reasons to suspect the existence of the fever before the delivery of the patient; and again it has been known not to make its appearance under eight or ten days, and a much longer period is noticed by some authors.

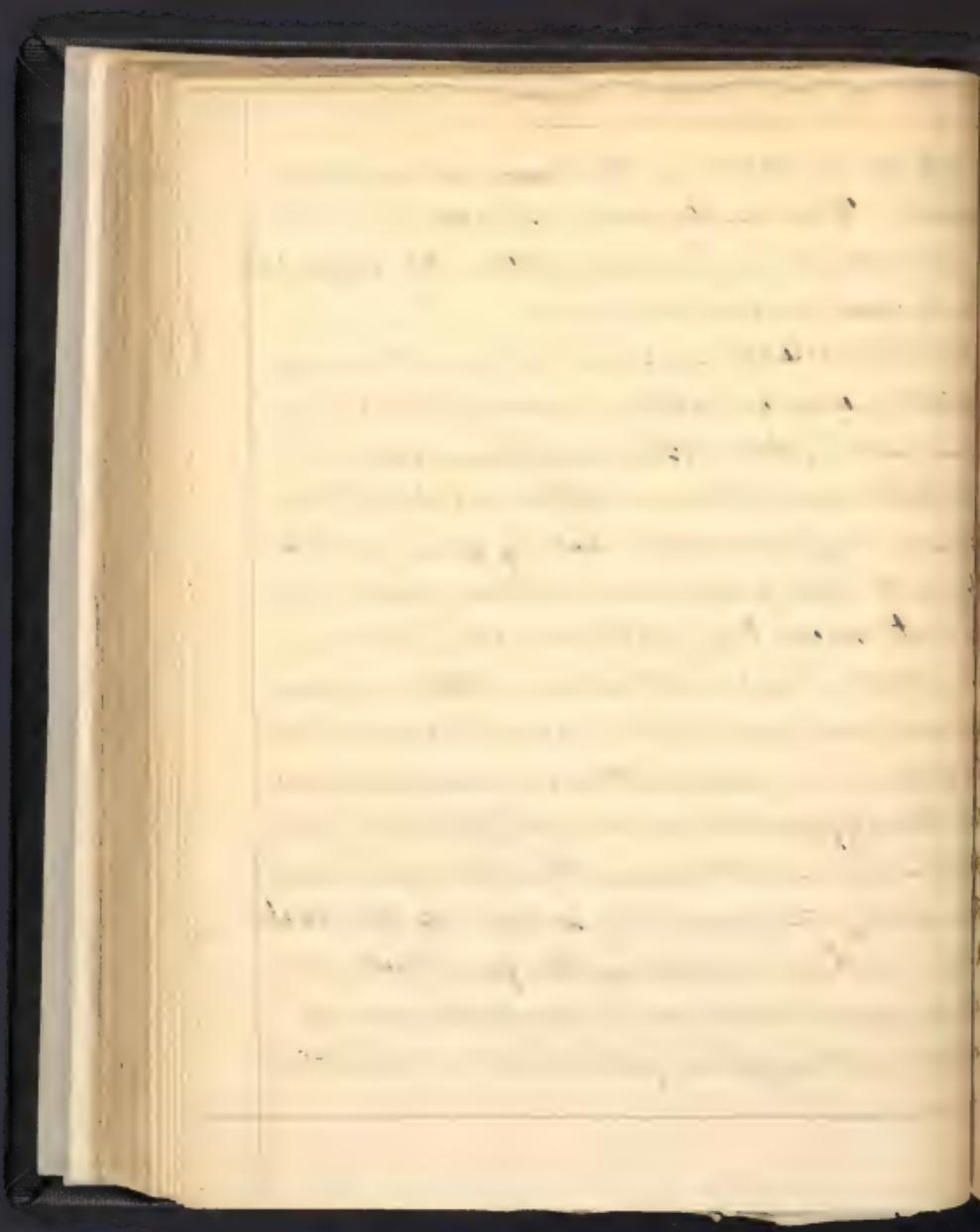
Though shivering is most commonly the first symptom, yet some of the worst cases do sometimes occur without any such symptom, and in others equally severe there is no more than a slight chill.

When pain comes on without rigor, it is frequently mistaken for some other affection, such as an effort of the uterus to throw off some extraneous substance; pain is therefore a deceitful symptom, and when it is preceded by a chill, is apt to occasion some embarrassment by the irregular manner of its appearance, and the consequent



difficulty of discovering the true nature of the disease. There are also some instances where the pain does not immediately follow the chill, but such cases are said to be rare.

When the attack is ushered in by a shivering, violent pain, and extreme soreness of the abdomen soon follow. But sometimes pain is the first symptom, and then it will often come on by paroxysms, having some resemblance to after-pains. And at other it will come on with such long intervals, as to induce a hope that it will not return, that the pain arose from some other cause than inflammation. The pain in the commencement is in the hypogastric region, sometimes in the right and sometimes in the left side indi-
minately; it frequently shoots into the back, hips, or thighs; sometimes the principal seat of the pain at the commencement is in one or both of the groins just where the round ligament

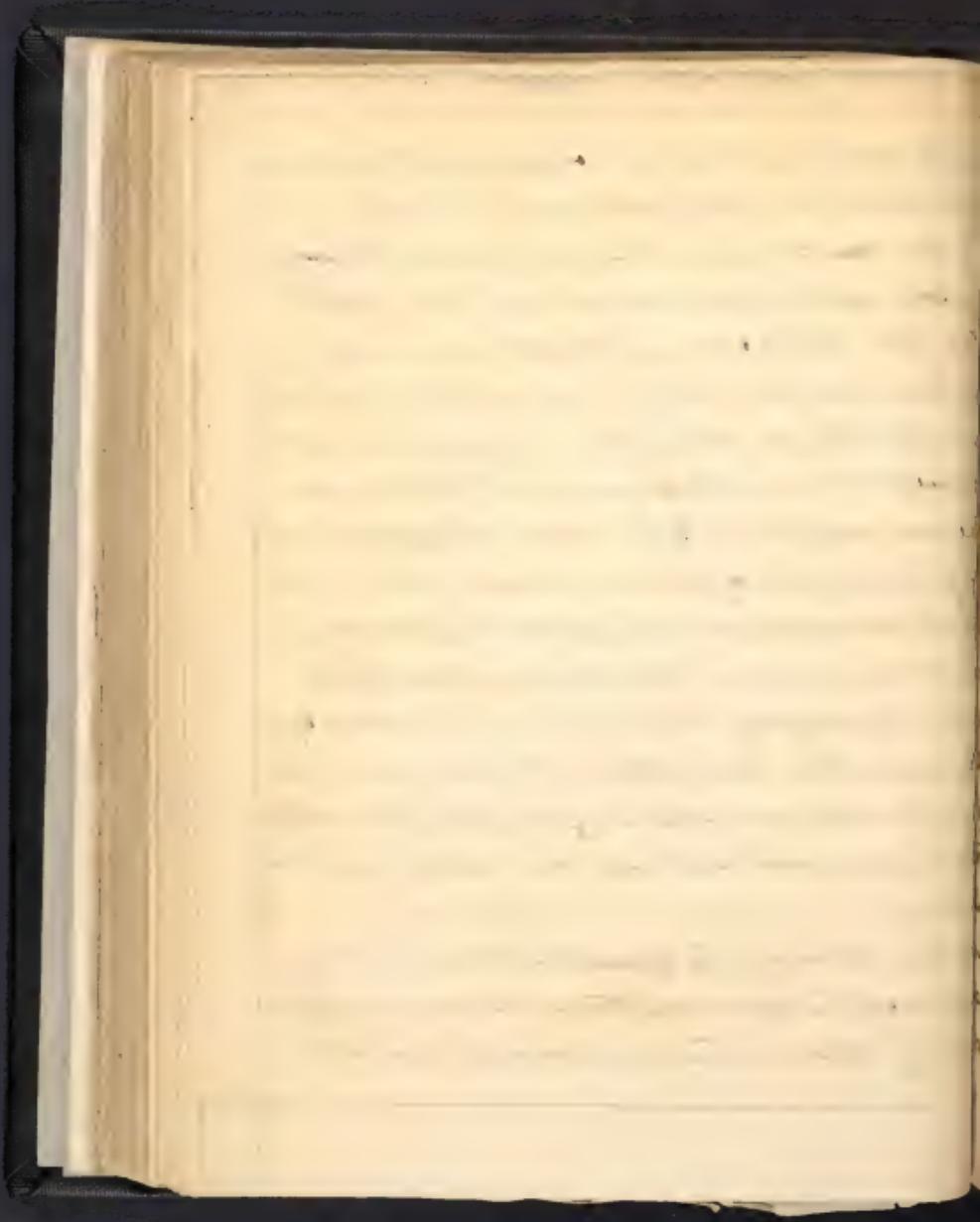


ments emerge: sometimes a pain in the stomach gives the first warning of attack.

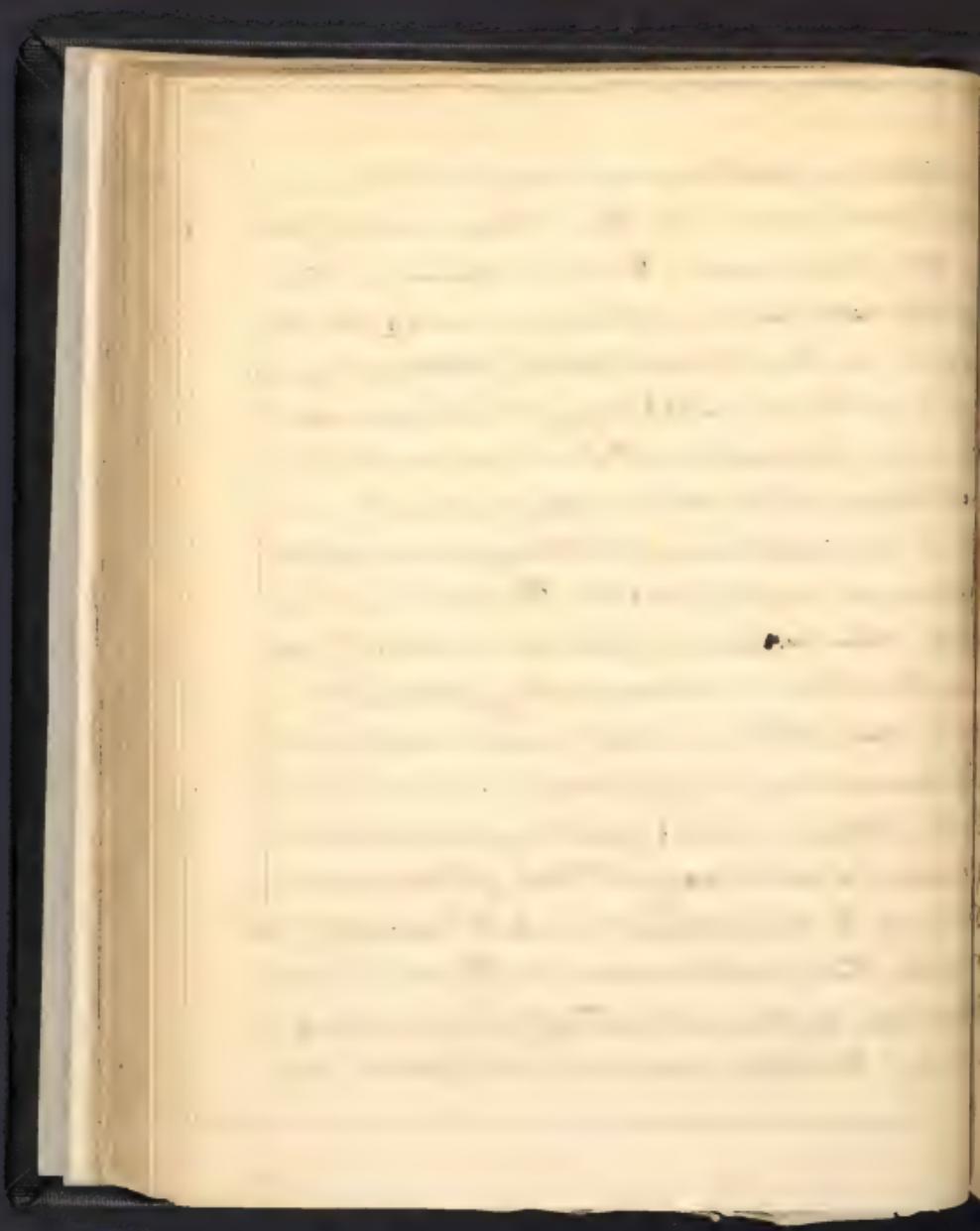
Of the causes of this disease there is little to be said which can be well substantiated.

The late Dr. Young professor of midwifery at Edinburgh was of opinion that purpura, or strictly so called is in every instance the consequence of contagion; and that the contagious matter of the disease is capable only of producing its effects in consequence of a peculiar predisposition given by delivery and its consequences. Which he attempts to prove by saying, that it prevailed as an epidemic in the hospital of Edinburgh, and that it was eradicated by emptying the wards, thoroughly ventilating, and newly painting them.

In this country, at present, it is a pretty well received opinion that it is an inflammatory disease, and by some of our most



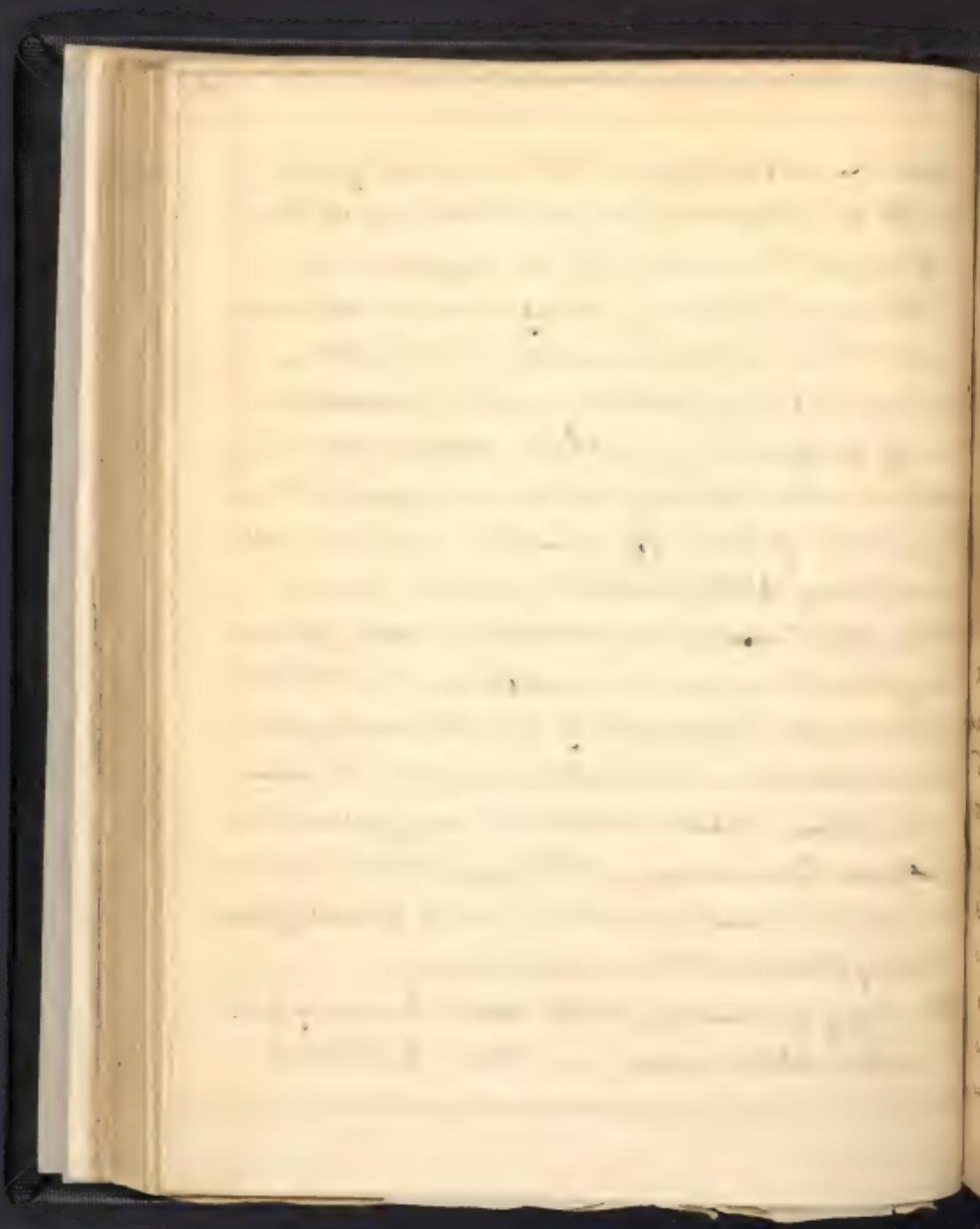
respectable practitioners thought to have its origin sometimes in the uterus; and of these is Dr Chapman. It is his opinion that purpura fever most commonly has its origin in the uterus itself, produced by indigestion or violence in delivery, which exerts more or less upon the abdominal contents, according to the vehemence of attack, and the predisposition of the different parts to assume a morbid state. Though the professor also believes it has been correctly remarked that it occasionally follows the most easy labours, so as to preclude altogether the idea of any injury having been sustained by the uterus or its appendages. In such instances he asks may not this predisposition be owing to the relaxation and debility into which the part is thrown in consequence of the previous distention by pregnancy. It is the opinion of Dr James prof-



upon of midwifery in this university who
has had ample experience, that much de-
pends upon the state of the system at
the time of delivery, being more or less predis-
posed to an inflammatory disposition
from not having used the proper precautions
during pregnancy, such as occasional re-
suction when circumstances require it im-
proper food of too gross a nature, spirations li-
quors of any kind, long and difficult labours.

When this disease has followed an easy labour,
may it not in some instances be produced
by too great a quantity of blood pouring into
the substance of the uterus, from its being
in a relaxed state, (but not sufficient to
produce hemorrhagy) thereby producing conges-
tion and inflammation, and finally ex-
tending itself to the peritonium?

This may probably be the case, knowing how
much blood was in the habit of



entering that viscous before delivery, for the removal
ishment of the fetus.

Here I might give some diagnostic symptoms
to distinguish this disease from several others:
as the milk fever, after pains, the red, inflam-
mation of the bladder, &c. But as I have treated
of the symptoms of genuine fever at some
earlier, and should have much repetition
I think it unnecessary.

The prognosis is favorable when the patient
can change her position to either side, when
the secretion of milk commences or ceases,
when the tumefaction of the abdomen
diminishes, and when the retentiveness of
the attendants for the child.

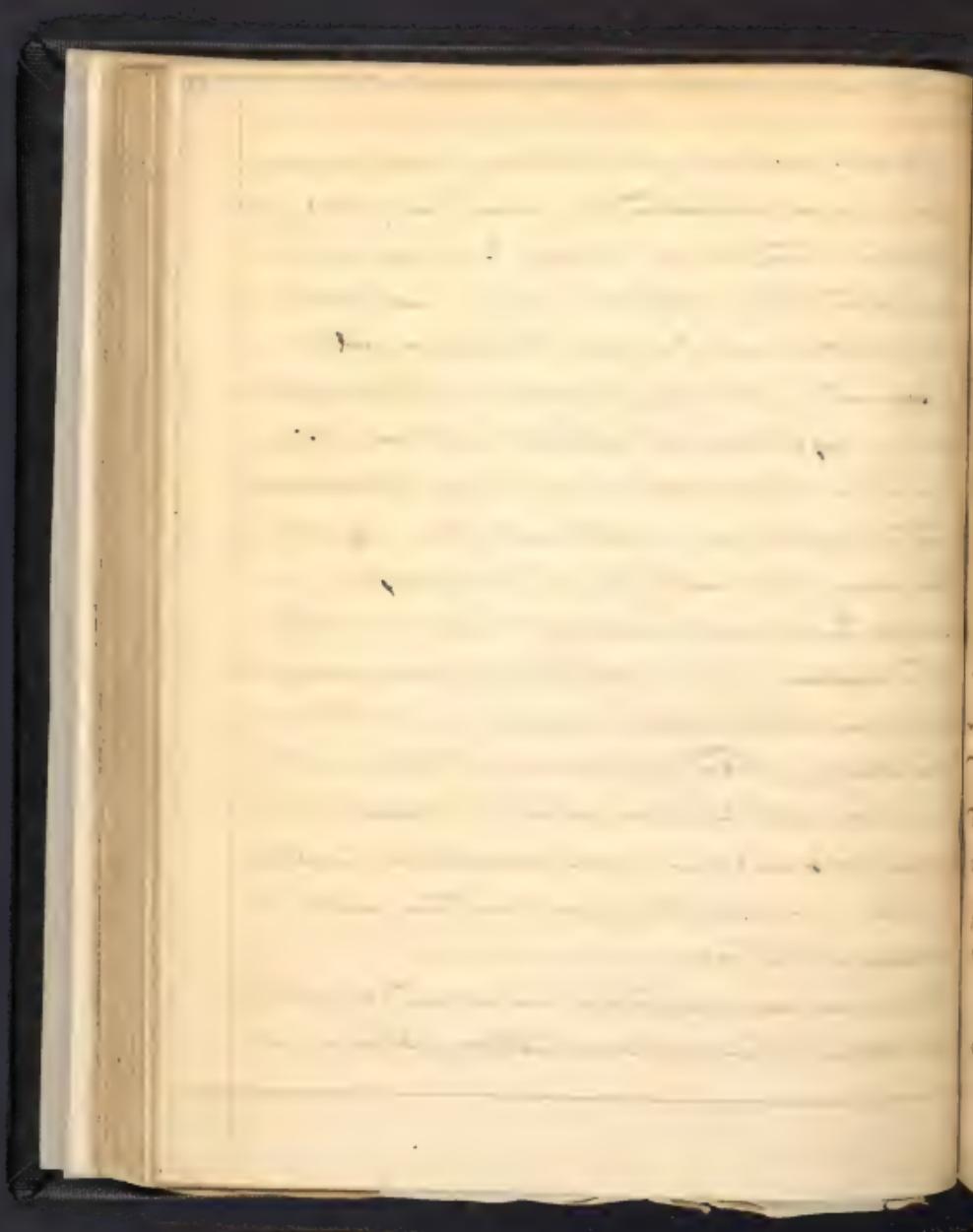
Treatment, this disease like most others
has been variously treated by practitioners,
while some recommend depurative largely,
others say we must proceed cautiously to the
use of the lancet and other directly debilitating
remedies.



Dr. Burns recommends bleeding in a manner
that is well calculated to make the young practitioner doubt its propriety. But happy for
mankind this futile and inert practice is
now abandoned; 'tis now the plan panther-
ishly, in this country to evacuate the system
largely regardless of the state of the pulse.
For 'tis a fallacious sign, being often small
and depressed in proportion to the maligny of
the case, and necessary of the lancet.

Bleed therefore to a patient labouring under
this disease, and before debility from excessive
arterial action has come on; we should im-
mediately proceed to the use of the lancet,
and bleed until the patient is relieved of
fever, or syncope comes on, which operation
must be repeated when ever the pain or
unmeasiness returns.

After we have subdued in some degree by
the lancet the inflammatory action, we



must then recur to purges; but sometimes from the state of the stomach the patient is affected with nausea and a disposition to vomit under such circumstances we must exhibit an emetic. After which we must use purgatives, the best of which is Calomel given in large doses so as to evacuate completely the alimentary canal, and this if necessary may be aided by injections of a mild nature. After the employment of the above remedies has expunged catarrhal action, then we must make use of fomentations and emollient embrocations to the abdomen. The mild diaphoretics are also useful, used so as to produce a gentle diaphoresis. The propriety of using blisters in this disease has been disputed by some. They say the irritation which they cause is not counterbalanced by the relief they afford the patient. They should never be applied until inflammation

and a number of other things of which I have no knowledge. It is a matter of fact that the
most important of these is the
loss of time which occurs in the course of
our travels. Doubtless, however, all
is needed to take care of that, and particularly
when the party is composed of a
prosperous party like ours, who would not
enter the city without a desire to pass
the night at one of the palaces or in some
other comfortable lodgings. In such cases
it is necessary to go over where there
are all kinds of accommodations. This
is not to be done, however, until we have
arrived at our destination. Then
we will go to the place where we intend to
rest, and make up our minds about
what kind of place we want.

is considerably reduced, at which time they prove advantageous.

In the low or sinking stage of this fever we should make use of stimulants, among which Camphor may be used alone or in conjunction with Opium and Tartar emetic. And in the last stage, spirit of Im-pertine is recommended to be exhibited internally in large doses, and also applied externally.

Oct. 26th 1871 276 Mts pass
and I had Marked all the roads
and always kept guides in and out.
The instruments of new ideas travel
fast and far. The new age is here.
The new is now defined but
the old has much the same
as it always did but it is old.
old ideas as old men are in the
ways and the most rigid in古老
old ways.